

Education Department

Procedures to follow during Severe Weather - Winter 2023-24 School Guidelines

In Gwynedd, periods of severe weather are a comparatively rare occurrence and schools are only rarely forced to close under such circumstances. However, it is important that every Governing Body ensures that there are clear arrangements in place to cater for such occasions when some children have to be sent home early or where an entire school is forced to close due to severe weather so as to safeguard all pupils and staff's health and well-being.

This document sets out good practice as regards severe weather. It is a matter for Governors to draw up procedures for their school and to ensure that all staff members have a clear grasp of their role and responsibility during severe weather.

1. All decisions as regards school closure or sending children home early should be considered in light of the fact that every child is entitled to 190 days education annually, and that several of them are also entitled to free school meal.
2. It is at the headteacher's discretion whether or not a school should be closed. The decision will rest on an assessment of the relevant factors including weather forecasts, the situation in the area where the school is located, the situation regarding staff travelling circumstances, etc. A Headteacher's inability to reach the school does not in itself justify closure.
3. It may be the case that only some children need to be sent home early, i.e. in several situations only those children who use school transport or those who reside in certain areas of the catchment area will need to be sent home early. All options require consideration before it is decided to close a school.
4. Schools should keep Severe Weather risk assessments current – examples are provided for school use, for adoption and up-dating by Governing Bodies.
5. A '**School Closure in Extreme Weather Checklist**' is provided to assist a headteacher in the decision whether or not to close a school.

Emergency Incidents - School Closure System

6. When it is decided to close a school, **the head teacher should notify the Education Department by using the 'Emergency Incidents - School Closure' system** www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/closures
7. The emergency incidents – school closure system provides regular information for the media regarding schools that are closed, so that the information is included in the relevant news bulletins and enables parents to receive timely information. Schools should consider whether other arrangements need to be made to notify parents as it is unlikely that every parent will listen to news bulletins. This is especially important in those situations where a school is closed during the day and children are sent home early. Where it is not possible, or feasible to notify every parent that the children are being sent home, the school's procedures should note how appropriate it is, especially as regards young children, to keep the children on the school premises until they are collected. The situation regarding children

with special needs should also be considered. These arrangements should be regularly reviewed so as to ensure their effectiveness.

Transport

8. In an instance where transport providers notify the school that they wish to transport some children home early, the request should be complied with. It is the provider's responsibility to transport the children home safely and in submitting such a request, the provider will be responding to weather warnings or direct evidence that the weather is worsening. Such a request should not necessarily lead to a decision to send every child home early. If a provider is unable to provide a bus or taxi in the morning due to severe weather, then that transport will not be available in the afternoon. Under such circumstances, any parents who have decided to transport their children to school should be notified that they need to make arrangements to transport the children home in the afternoon as the usual school transport will not be available.

9. If it is decided to close a school, the headteacher should notify any transport providers of the decision. The arrangements for the following days should also be confirmed with the providers as soon as the relevant decision has been taken. If the providers cannot be contacted, the Transport Unit (01286 679535) or Rhian Wyn Williams (01286 679537) should be notified.

Staff

10. When it is decided not to open a school, staff that are able to travel to school, and **without placing themselves at risk**, should do so. The presence of such staff will assist to deal with children who maybe unaware of the decision to close and who consequently arrive at the school. It will be the headteacher's responsibility, having assessed the specific circumstances, to instruct these staff whether or not they need to remain on the school premises.

11. In circumstances where severe weather prevents individual workers from attending the workplace, one of the following options will need to be agreed with the Headteacher:

- Work from Home
 - Lose pay
 - Work additional hours
 - Take annual leave
- (Which ever is most appropriate)

Gritting

12. For your information, the Council's Highways, Engineering and YGC Department prioritises keeping roads clear in winter, as follows:

Priority 1 – Trunk roads; Class 1 roads; Council roads (tied in with the above) that provide single access to a town or village, or to a centre that handles emergencies. **This includes the trunk roads outside a number schools.**

Priority 2 – Class 2 roads; other county roads that provide access to - schools; training centres; hospital/day centre; town centre; roads that connect with a town business zone; other 'special' roads such as steep hills and roads on high ground.

13. It is suggested that a suitable supply be kept (considering the school's surface-area, height above sea-level, etc), of grit either in an appropriate tub or any suitable locked container. Grit and (spreaders) for the work can also be purchased from 'local' suppliers such as Jewson, Huws Gray Fitlock, and 'Yorkshire Purchasing'. School staff are not expected to grit large surface-areas – the aim should be to grit the main paths within the school grounds.

14. To obtain help with gritting and grit boxes see first contact email:

CynnalTiroedd@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Requests for emergency work has to be sent to the email above, with location and description of the amount of work required, and as much notice as possible.

This will be considered as an additional request for work and a 'dayworks' sheet will be raised for the work. There will be a cost for the work.

Priority is given to securing a safe walking path from the entrance to the school door as an initial point.

Emergency work will be dealt with as soon as possible and as resources and weather conditions allow.

If additional work is required this will then be programmed as soon as resources / weather allows.

Contact points for areas (office hours 08:00-16:00):

Arfon

WynMorris@gwynedd.llyw.cymru (07920 591360)

Dwyfor

BarryEdwards@gwynedd.llyw.cymru (07766 161349)

Meirionydd

CliveJones@gwynedd.llyw.cymru (07788 568285)

DavidMeyrickOwen@gwynedd.llyw.cymru (07766 990323)

Gwynedd

Geraint W Hughes, Grounds Maintenance Senior Officer

GeraintWynHughes@gwynedd.llyw.cymru 07770598987 / 01286 682780

CynnalTiroedd@gwynedd.llyw.cymru